

Podcast 65: Discernment, Epilogue

QUESTION: As an epilogue to our series on Discernment, Denver provides additional information and insight into false spirits and how we can avoid being overtaken by them.

DENVER: In addition to varying forms of ignorance and study, diligence and sloth, interest and indifference that separates each of us in our religious beliefs, there are also false spirits that mislead and confuse. The term “false spirit” is not limited to the idea of a devil, imp, or mischievous personage, but includes the much broader attitude, outlook, or cultural assumptions that people superimpose atop religion. False spirits—in the form of ignorant, incomplete, or incorrect ideas—are easily conveyed from one person to another. People convey false spirits every time they teach a false idea and the student accepts the idea. False spirits infect every religious tradition on earth. This is not limited to Eastern religions that *deny* Christ but also include Christianity *and* Mormonism. So long as there is anything false or any error, a false spirit prevails.

Different religious structures lend themselves to be overtaken by false spirits through different means. If you have a hierarchy, only the top needs to be taken captive by a false spirit. If it is a diffused religion, then all you have to do is take captive the theological seminaries in order to spread the false spirit. But if the religion is individual, and each person is standing on their own—accountable for their relation to God; accountable to learn, to pray, to reach upward, and to have God connect with them individually—then the only way to corrupt a ~~diffused~~ [individual] religion is to corrupt every single believer, every single practitioner.

In the new scriptures there is a section in which Joseph Smith discusses, at length, the topic of false spirits. It’s an editorial he published in the *Times and Seasons* on April the 1st of 1842. This new section 147 in the Teachings and Commandments is worth careful study—the Teachings and Commandments being the new volume of scripture, recovering and restoring the text as it was originally—available, if you’re interested, either for free online to read at scriptures.info; or if you want to purchase a copy, it’s available through Amazon. This new section of the Teachings and Commandments is worth careful study.

Keep in mind the meaning of several words: “Priesthood” means a fellowship. You could have a priesthood that is a fellowship of men; you can have a priesthood that is a fellowship between men and angels; you can have a priesthood that is a fellowship between man and Christ; and you can have a priesthood that is a fellowship between man and God the Father. In section 147, Joseph Smith ties discerning of false spirits to priesthood, and therefore, when a person has an association with **heavenly** angels, they are not apt to be misled by fallen, **false** spirits. Joseph Smith also uses the term “keys” in section 147. Joseph used the term to mean “understanding,” the greatest key being the ability to ask God and receive an answer. In the T&C 10:1: *I have given him [referring to Joseph] the keys of the mysteries of the revelations which are sealed.* In section 141,

Joseph (speaking about his ordination of Hyrum and endowing and in blessing him): *Joseph, who shall show unto him the keys whereby he may ask and receive* (T&C 141:32 RE). And then a reference again in that same section to another servant: *Let my servant William [Law] also receive the keys by which he may ask and receive blessings* (ibid, vs. 33).

Joseph used the term “keys of the kingdom” to mean: when a person can ask and receive and answer each time he asks—they hold the keys of the kingdom because the kingdom belongs to God, and God must direct its affairs for it to be His. Here are some excerpts from Joseph’s editorial, section 147: *One great evil is that men are ignorant of the nature of spirits: their power[s], laws, government, intelligence, [and so on], and imagine that when there is anything like power, revelation, or vision manifested, that it must be of God* (T&C 147:6 RE). That is a great evil.

After criticizing the experiences of Methodists, Presbyterians, and others, Joseph inquired about manifestations of false spirits: *They consider it to be the power of God and [the] glorious manifestation from God—a manifestation of what?* (ibid). He’s just described what these people take as glorious manifestations. And he says—despite their supernatural appearance—it’s a manifestation of what? *Is there any intelligence communicated? Are the curtains of Heaven withdrawn, or the purposes of God developed? Have they seen and conversed with an angel—[and] have the glories of futurity burst upon their view? No!* (ibid) In other words, nothing has advanced that is of God: edifying, instructing, and providing greater intelligence. It’s simply spiritual voyeurism, and it’s evil. *Nothing is [a] greater injury to the children of men than to be under the influence of a false spirit when they think they have the spirit of God* (ibid, vs. 9). Then he extends this outward, as he continued: *The Turks, the Hindus, the Jews, the Christians, the Indian[s]—in fact all nations have been deceived, imposed upon, and injured through the mischievous effects of false spirits* (ibid vs. 10). Then he, close to the end, says:

*And we shall at last have to come to this conclusion, whatever we may think of revelation, that without it we can neither know nor understand anything of God, or the devil; ...it is equally as plain that without a divine communication they must remain in ignorance. The world **always** mistook false prophets for true ones, and those that were sent of God they considered to be the false prophets, and hence they killed, stoned, punished and imprisoned the true prophets, and [these] had to hide themselves in deserts, and dens, and caves of the earth, and though the most honorable men of the earth, they banished them from their society as vagabonds, [whilst] they cherished, honored, and supported knaves, vagabonds, hypocrites, imposters, and the basest of men.* (ibid vs. 11)

Read that section. False spirits are actively involved whenever God begins a work. And there are many false spirits, vying for your acceptance now at work among us. That having been said—it’s time to stop dividing and to begin uniting. There are enough divisions in Christianity and in Mormonism. This does not need to continue. The restoration is intended to bring unity, not division. Division needs to end.

The vineyard that the Lord began the restoration in was cumbered with all sorts of strange fruit. I mean... I've spent a lifetime referring to it as the Jacob 5; in the new Book Mormon layout, it's one of the very few chapters that I can actually point you to from memory—it's Jacob 3 in the new layout. So, I'm becoming familiar with it.

Talking about the condition of this vineyard—and it's cumbered with all sorts of strange fruit. None of it worth harvesting; none of it worth keeping; none of it worth laying up and preserving against the harvest. The allegory says:

This is the last time that I shall nourish my vineyard, for the end is nigh at hand and the season speedily cometh. And if ye labor with your mights with me, ye shall have joy in the fruit [with] which I [shall] lay up unto myself against the time which will soon come. And it came to pass that the servants did go and labor with their mights, and the Lord of the vineyard labored also with them. And they did obey the commandments of the Lord of the vineyard in all things. (Jacob 3:26-27 RE)

Well, *that's* fairly critical. The Lord's gonna labor with ya, but he's gonna expect you to obey his commandments in all things. Have you recently read the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant? Are you determined to obey the Master of the vineyard and His commandments in all things? Maybe we oughta read that twice before we berate one another, belittle one another, argue with one another, dismiss one another, otherwise we're really *not* laboring *with* the Lord of the vineyard to help for the coming harvest. Instead, we're embracing a false spirit, and we're dividing one another, and we're trying— Our ambition, whether we are willing to acknowledge it or not, our ambition is to set this into the same sort of divisive factions as the Lord condemned to Joseph in 1820: *[they have] a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof...they teach for commandments the doctrines of men* (JSH 1:19; see also JSH 2:5 RE). They're *all* corrupt.

And there began to be the natural fruit again in the vineyard. And the natural branches began to grow and thrive exceedingly, and the wild branches began to be plucked off and to be cast away... (Jacob 3:27 RE). Some of the plucking and some of the casting away is voluntarily done by those who submit to false spirits that stir them up to anger against one another, and they depart from fellowship, thinking themselves justified before God when, in fact, all they're doing is being plucked and cast away.

And so, I took the Book of Mormon seriously. I entertained no doubts. I employed no apologetics. I just accepted the book and tried to understand it. As I did so—going through the text of the Book of Mormon—there were moments when there were glints, where something leapt off the page to me as if someone had flashed the reflection of the sun off a windshield passing down the street, and it aligns with the right angle of the sun. The text itself seemed to spark to me. As I took it seriously, I could breath the spirit of the writers. I beheld more as I went through that text than the text will yield to the cautious and wary reader. The Book of Mormon—like the spirits I referred to earlier—the Book of Mormon also has a spirit, and that Spirit is Christ. If you want to relate to the Spirit of Christ and not a false spirit, drop all your apprehensions, lower your guard,

and see if the Book of Mormon does not yield the Spirit of Christ. It was a better text than any other I had encountered in conveying the Spirit of Christ. It is in fact the most correct book, and a man *can* get closer to God by abiding its precepts than any other book. It can be trusted as a source of direct information in our language. We don't have to encounter uncertainties and hurdles in trying to manage the language and understand the vocabulary, as is always the challenge when you're looking at a New Testament or an Old Testament text.

The New Testament text has a statement that was made by Christ:

Think not that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill; for truly I say unto you, heaven and earth must pass away, but one jot or one tittle shall by no means pass from the law until all shall be fulfilled. [Whosoever] therefore shall break one of [the] least [of these] commandments and [shall] teach men so to do, he shall by no means be saved in the kingdom of Heaven. But [whosoever] shall do and teach these commandments of the law until it shall be fulfilled, the same shall be called great and shall be saved in the kingdom of Heaven. For I say unto you, except your righteousness shall exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven.
(Matthew 3:17 RE)

That's a text from Joseph Smith's Translation—or Joseph Smith's Inspired Version—of the New Testament. He's added a few words in there, including the word “until.”

The English word that gets used in this text about “fulfilled” was translated from the Greek word “pleroo.” Pleroo can be interpreted: “to make fully known, proclaim fully” instead of “to accomplish.” In that sense, a scholar might conclude from the Greek that Christ's statement has nothing to do with “ending” or with “completing” the law of Moses. And there are scholars who have taught that—Christians. So, there's an ambiguity about whether Christ intended for the law of Moses to come fully to an end or if He was simply establishing it firmly by fulfilling it or adhering to it. Any ambiguity about what Christ intended is removed when His declaration to the Nephites is added to your understanding:

And it came to pass that when Jesus had said these words he perceived that there were some among them who marveled, and wondered what he would concerning the law of Moses; for they understood not the saying that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new. And he said unto them: Marvel not that I said unto you that old things [had] passed away, and that all things had become new. Behold, I say unto you that the law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses. Behold, I am he that gave the law, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel; therefore, the law in me is fulfilled, for I have come to fulfill the law; therefore it hath an end. The covenant which I have made with my people is not all fulfilled; but the law which was given unto Moses hath an end in me. (3 Nephi 15:2-5,8; see also 3 Nephi 7:2 RE)

Those who teach the law of Moses has not come to an end are led by a false spirit. That having been said, someone that has been misled by a false spirit does not necessarily mean that they are an evil person. It only means they have been misled. Recall Christ rebuking Peter and calling Peter “Satan” because Peter was advising the Lord against the determined trip to Jerusalem where he would be crucified. And Peter told him, advised him, counselled him, and objected *far be it from you, Lord* (Matthew 9:2 RE). Don’t do this thing. And the Lord, responding to Peter, called him “Satan.” There are many people who are only kept from the truth because they do not know where to find it.

The obligation of those who can teach truth is to teach it. Overcoming most false spirits is to be done by gentleness, meekness, pure knowledge, and persuasion; not by rebuking, condemning, and dismissing the honest seeker for truth. At some point every one of us has emerged from a cloud of falsehoods into acceptance of some truth. We’re no better than others who remain under that cloud but we have an obligation to invite them to join in receiving light and truth. Likewise, we have an obligation to continue to search for truth. Until you have an understanding of *all* things, you’re still misled, at least in part.

The prophets are not all fulfilled, and there will yet be many things returned and restored—this will include holy days—when we have a holy place to observe in proper order the things practiced between the time of Adam until the time of Abraham.

So the list goes on:

- The *mountains* is the first thing.
- *To divide the seas*: We have an example of that with Moses.
- *To dry up waters*: We have an example of that with Joshua when they reached the river Jordan.
- *To turn them out of their course*—which was done again at the time of Enoch.
- *To put at defiance the armies of nations*: Elijah.
- *To divide the earth, to break every band, to stand in the presence of God, to do all things according to **his** will, according to **his** command*. When it comes to “breaking every band,” keep that in mind, because we are going to return to that in a moment. And then it says,
- *To subdue principalities and powers*. **These** are in the spiritual realm. Commanding devils? Subduing principalities and powers? These are rebellious spirits, cast down from heaven. These are those that pretend to be—and often are—false ministering spirits or angels.

Have any of you ever witnessed the miracle of healing? Because I have. I’ve participated in some of those. But there are people I know who I would loved to have healed, who I begged God for the blessing that they *be* healed. I’ve gotten answers. I’ve been told why they will not be healed. But I don’t have the ability to require God to heal at *my* insistence. Nor do any of you. Nor has any man *ever* in all the account of scripture. Christ could not heal some people in some instances, and he was the son of God. In all of scripture, there is only one moment when it appears that anyone could be healed no matter what their condition was—only one time—and at that moment, Christ was resurrected; and he was appearing as a resurrected being, not still as a mortal. As a mortal, Christ could not heal some. As a mortal, Christ could not persuade the Father to change the Father’s will.

Some of you, like the antagonists of Job, have said to others of you that you don't have enough faith to be healed. You're Worm-tongue. You're a false spirit. You're an accuser of the brethren. You have absolutely no right to make that assertion. Would you tell Christ when He could not perform a healing, "Jesus, your problem is you don't have enough faith." Because that's essentially what you are saying. You're saying, "Men ought to be sovereign, not God." You're saying, "Signs, which surely are given, signs follow people of faith incessantly."

There is a great deal left to be done. And there is no one seriously entertaining the possibility of constructing a city of holiness, a city of peace, a people that are fruit worthy to be laid up against the harvest. No one has made the effort until now. And while you may look at us and say, "You've done a crude job. You've done a rudimentary job. It needs improvement." Then help us improve it! Stop sitting back and throwing rocks. This is a time to gather, not to disperse. The same garbage that existed at the beginning—when Joseph looked around and saw confusion and disharmony—wants to creep in among us. Recognize that's a false spirit. If you'll cast it out of yourself and if you'll look at the words of the covenant that was offered in September of 2017, what you'll find is that Christ wants us—like the Book of Mormon explains—to be meek, to be humble, and to be easily intreated. And therefore, entreat one another to honor God, and recognize that all of us aspire to be equal. Whether you're at the top or at the root, the aspiration is the same—to be equal.

There's a statement in the Book of Mormon—it's a remarkable statement because it's spoken from God's vantage point, but it's a harrowing, it's a pathetic comment; it instills pathos in the person that hears it—I think Nephi wrote it: *[God loveth all] who will have him to be their God* (1 Nephi 17:20; see also 1 Nephi 5:20 RE). Because anytime you draw a line, anytime you set a mark, and say, "I will go thus far and no further" with a God who wants to walk with you from Jerusalem to Emmaus and spend the day conversing with you and opening to your mind how in Moses and all the prophets—everything —testified of Him, and you say, "Ummm, no, I'm not willing to go to Emmaus. You got three hundred yards, and at the end of three hundred yards, I'm turning back. Because I'll go thus far and no further." They will *never* have the opportunity to break bread and have their eyes opened and realize that they're walking alongside the Savior as they go on this journey.

You don't interrupt it. The religion of Christ is living. A living God has a living religion. And a living religion makes us *all* insecure, because we don't know what's coming next. We have to be humble enough and nimble enough to respond to whatever it is that comes next. That makes every one of us uncomfortable. That's who God is; that's what His religion is; that's what we're expected to accept.

So when a false spirit comes along and preaches, "Thus far and no further," or "You have to take a detour"—because the religion is not attempting to culminate in a restoration fully of all things that go back to the beginning—we have to become Jewish-Mormons, or we have to become Christian-Mormons, or we have to become Evangelical-Mormons, or we have to become Buddhist-Mormons. Well, Mormonism includes all of those things—but it isn't *that*. We should believe in a restoration

that is going to culminate in a return of everything—including things that we, right now, don't know about and will never know about, if we don't stay on task with God, welcoming every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God.

The foregoing are excerpts taken from:

- Denver's lecture entitled "Signs Follow Faith," given in Centerville, UT on March 3, 2019; and
- Podcast 63 entitled "Every Word - Part 2," recorded March 4, 2019, in Sandy, UT.